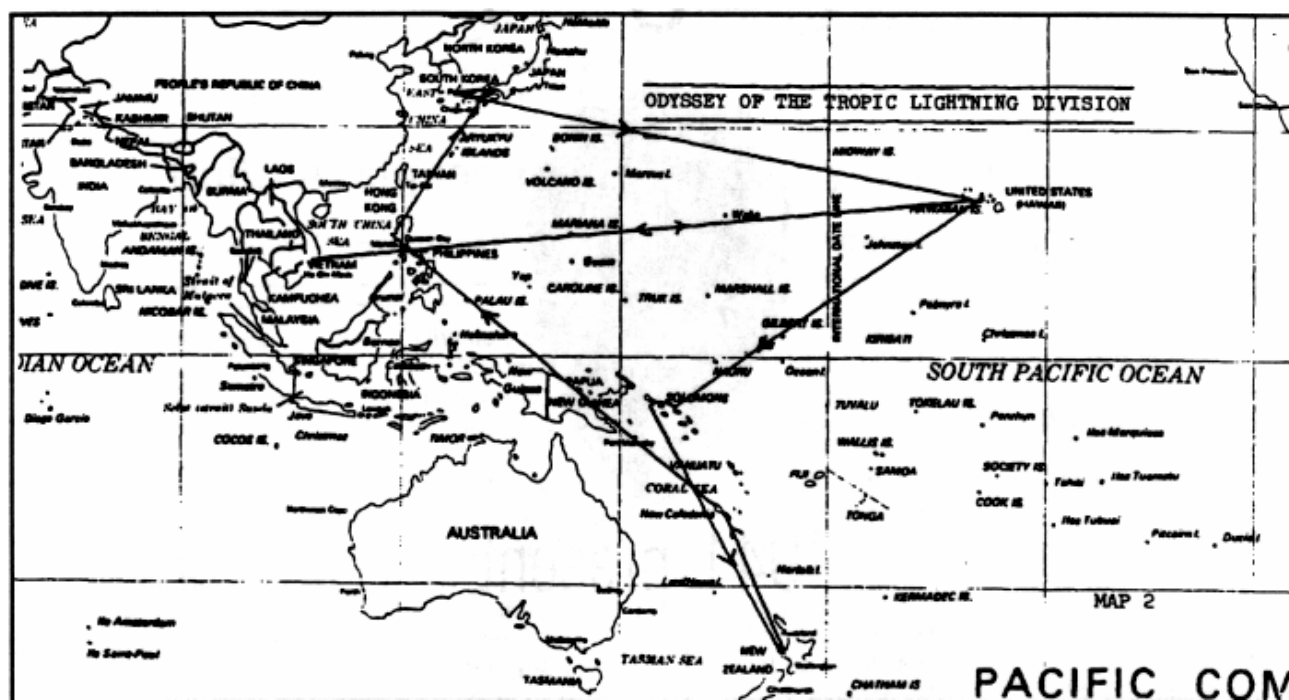


# 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

## A Brief History

Tropic Lightning: Ready to Strike! Anywhere, Anytime...

The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Light) has a proud history from the time it was activated in 1941 to the present as it stands guard over the Pacific Basin. What follows is the story of how the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division came to be called Tropic Lightning.



## Activation

The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was activated at Schofield Barracks, Territory of Hawaii, October 1, 1941, along with the now deactivated 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Both divisions were comprised of elements from the famous Hawaiian Division. The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was composed of the

27<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, and the 298<sup>th</sup> Infantry Hawaii National Guard regiment, while the 24<sup>th</sup> Division integrated the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments, as well as the 299<sup>th</sup> Infantry Hawaii Army National Guard. Other combat and support elements were added from the Hawaiian Division and newly created or transferred units.

## World War II Participation

Central Pacific  
Guadalcanal  
Northern Solomons  
Luzon

## World War II

**DAY OF INFAMY**- These two new divisions operated for only 10 weeks in peace before Japanese planes attacked Oahu on the morning of December 7, 1941.

The first attack wave flew down from the north, splitting into two groups. One circled around the Leeward shore heading for the battleships at Pearl Harbor and the bombers at Hickam Air Field. The other came down between the Ko'olau and Waianae mountain ranges over the central plain. The target was the fighter planes at Wheeler Army Air Field. The Japanese flew over Schofield, dropped their bombs on Wheeler, then circled around for a second pass.

The Japanese never flew through Kulekole Pass although we have many eyewitness accounts that they did. At the sound of the explosions, men came pouring out of their houses and barracks. Looking up, they saw the Japanese coming from the west flying low. To those on the ground, it would appear that the Japanese came through Kulekole Pass.

Immediately following the attack, both the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions were dispatched to their defensive positions. The 24th deployed to the North and Leeward Shores, and the 25th to the beaches on the south and windward sides of the Island, including Honolulu and Waikiki.

Under the threat of another Japanese attack, the following year was spent in these defensive positions, while units focused on intensive jungle training.

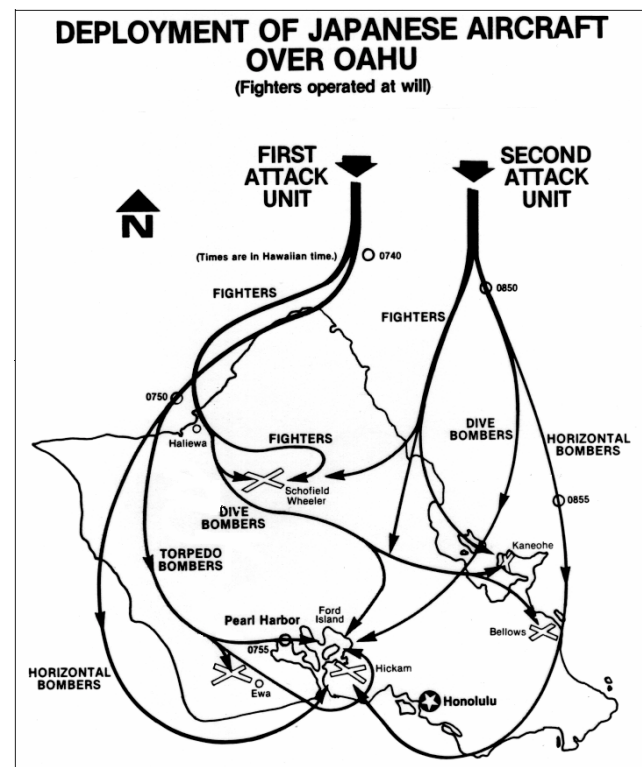
**GUADALCANAL** – Finally receiving the call to arms, the 25th Division began its deployment November 25, 1942. Troop ships delivered them to the South Pacific, landing on Guadalcanal between December 17, 1942 and January 4, 1943.

The Division received orders almost immediately upon arrival to launch an attack against the strong Japanese forces that other Army and Marine Corps contingents had been fighting doggedly for nearly five months. The Division jumped off on the morning of January 10, 1943. After a month of bitter combat, it succeeded in defeating the enemy forces, completing its first wartime mission with speed and aggression.

**OTHER SOLOMON ISLANDS** - The next combat action for the Division took place in the Solomons by clearing the Arundel and Kolombangara Islands, now Kohinggo Islands, held by the enemy and participating in the capture of Vella LaVella and New Georgia in the late summer of 1943.

Following the Solomon campaigns, the Division headed for New Zealand, and subsequently New Caledonia, for a period of rest as well as intensive training. The soldiers had been depleted by harsh jungle battles against a highly motivated enemy.

**PHILIPPINES** - The rest didn't last long, though, before they received orders to deploy to the Philippines. The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division landed at Luzon on January 11, 1945. Once in country, its



## World War II

### Medal of Honor Recipients

- **Sgt. William G. Fornier**  
Co. M, 35<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- **T/5 Lewis Hall**  
Co. M, 35<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- **Cpt. Charles W. Davis**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 27<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- **T/4 Laverne Parrish**  
Med. Det., 161<sup>st</sup> Inf.
- **MSG Charles L. McGaha**  
Co. G, 35<sup>th</sup> Inf.
- **SSG Raymond H. Cooley**  
Co. B, 27<sup>th</sup> Inf.

men quickly pushed from the Lingayen Gulf to the main highway through Balete Pass where they joined forces with the 32nd Infantry Division. The 25th established a record of 165 consecutive days in active combat - a record awarded with the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, as well as six other unit citations.

All told, six Division soldiers were awarded Medals of Honor for their bravery and sacrifice during WWII.

## Occupation of Japan

In the wake of the successful Philippine campaign, the 25th Infantry Division began preparing for the invasion of Japan. However, World War II had officially ended before an invasion was actually launched, and the Tropic Lightning Division was instead sent to Osaka, Japan, to become part of the Army of Occupation.

## Korean War

On June 25, 1950, open warfare once again flared in Asia - now the Division's primary area of concern. The North Korean People's Army crossed the 38th Parallel this day in an unprovoked attack on the Republic of South Korea. Acting under United Nations orders, the

Tropic Lightning moved to Korea July 5-18, 1950.

**PUSAN** - The Division, under the command of Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, successfully completed its first mission: to block approaches to the port city Pusan. For this action, the Tropic Lightning received its first Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

**DRIVE INTO NORTH KOREA** - A breakout of the Pusan perimeter was followed by a successful drive into North Korea in October 1950. The Division joined Task Force Dolvin November 24 and together these soldiers successfully drove the enemy to the Yalu River.

In a sudden and unexpected reversal, though,

### ADOPTION OF NICKNAME & PATCH

During late 1943, the Division's shoulder patch, a lightning bolt superimposed on a taro leaf, was formally adopted. The taro leaf shape of the shoulder patch reflects the birth of the 25th from elements of the famous Hawaiian Division and is suggestive of the Pacific region where the Division was established, and where it had fought. The bolt of lightning symbolizes speed and aggressive spirit – a trait the Division proved in its battles for the Pacific. The colors of red and gold were those of the late Hawaiian monarchy.



The 25th Division had used "lightning" as the telephone call sign for Division Headquarters' arrival on Guadalcanal in December 1942. The Marines furthered the use of the nickname by calling the unit the Lightning Division. Lightning was subsequently changed to Tropic Lightning because the Division had spent the year in the tropics.

In a break from tradition, the Department of the Army officially approved the use of the nickname Tropic Lightning August 3, 1953. Authorization for the Division to use the nickname, in addition to its regular numerical designation, marked the first time that a divisional unit had been given this kind of permission by the Army.

## **Korean War Participation**

U.N. Defensive  
U.N. Offensive  
CCF Intervention  
1<sup>st</sup> U.N. Counteroffensive  
DDF Spring offensive  
U.N. Summer-Fall offensive  
2<sup>nd</sup> Korean Winter  
Korea, Summer-Fall 1952  
3<sup>rd</sup> Korean Winter  
Korea, Summer 1953

an overwhelming number of Chinese Communist troops crossed the Yalu and pushed back United Nations forces all along the front. The Division was grudgingly forced to carry out an orderly withdrawal and was ordered to take up defensive positions on the south bank of the Chongchon River November 30, 1950. Even these lines failed, but after short withdrawals, a permanent battle line was established south of Osan.

**INCHON/KIMPO AIR BASE** - After a month and a half of planning and reorganization, a new offensive was launched January 15, 1951, and was successfully completed by February 10 with the capture of Inchon and Kimpo Air Base. This was to be the first of several successful assaults on the Chinese/North Korean enemy force that helped turn the tide in the United Nations favor.

**IRON TRIANGLE** - The Division next participated in Operation Ripper, where it drove the enemy across the Han River. But continued success came with Operations Dauntless, Detonate and Piledriver in the spring of 1951. These offensives secured the famous "Iron Triangle" which secured the United Nations bargaining platform. With the leaders of four nations now at the negotiation table in the summer of 1951, Division activity slowed to patrol and defensive actions to maintain the main line of resistance. This type of action continued into the winter of 1952.

**SEOUL** - When negotiations began to fail, the Division assumed the responsibility of guarding the approaches of Seoul May 5, 1953. Within a few days a heavy assault was hurled at it from May 28-30, but repulsed. Again negotiators moved toward peace and, in July, the Division again moved to reserve status at Camp Casey where it remained for the signing of the armistice July 27, 1953. For this two-months of combat operations and the successful defense of the Seoul area, the Division received its second Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation. Fourteen Tropic Lightning soldiers were awarded Medals of Honor.

The Division remained in Korea until 1954 and returned to Hawaii from September through October of that year. After a 12-year absence, the 25th Infantry Tropic Lightning Division had come home.

## **Korean War Medal Of Honor Recipients**

**Pfc. William Thompson**  
Co. M, 24th Inf., Aug. 6, 1950  
**MSG Melvin O. Handrich**  
Co. C, 5th RCT, Aug. 25-26, 1950  
**Cpl. John W. Collier**  
Co. C, 27th Inf., Sept. 19, 1950  
**Sgt. William R. Jecelin**  
Co. C, 35th Inf., Sept. 19, 1950  
**Capt. Reginald B. Desiderio**  
Co. E, 27th Inf., Nov. 27, 1950  
**Capt. Lewis L. Millett**  
Co. E, 27th Inf., Feb. 7, 1951  
**SFC Donald R. Moyer**  
Co. E, 35th Inf., May 20, 1951

**Sgt. Cornelius H. Charlton**  
Co. C, 24th Inf., June 2, 1951  
**Pvt. Billy G. Kanell**  
Co. I, 35th Inf., Sept. 7, 1951  
**2nd Lt. Jerome Sudut**  
Co. B, 27th Inf., Sept. 15, 1951  
**Pfc. Bryant H. Womack**  
Med. Co., 14th inf., March 15, 1952  
**Cpl. Benito Martinez**  
Co. A, 27th Inf., Sept. 6, 1952  
**Sgt. Don Porter**  
Co. G, 14th Inf., Sept. 7, 1952  
**Pfc. Ernest E. West**  
Co. L, 14th Inf., Oct. 12, 1952

## **Vietnam War Participation**

Counteroffensive  
Counteroffensive- Phase II  
Counteroffensive- Phase II1  
Tet Counteroffensive  
Counteroffensive- Phase IV  
Counteroffensive- Phase V  
Counteroffensive- Phase VI  
Tet 69/Counteroffensive  
Summer-Fall 1969  
Winter-Spring 1970  
Sanctuary Counteroffensive  
Counteroffensive- Phase VII

## **Vietnam**

After its return to Hawaii in 1954, the Division established and conducted intensive training programs in jungle warfare techniques and the study of Asian languages, thus becoming the only trained counter-guerrilla unit in the U.S. Army.

In response to a request from the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV), the Division sent 100 helicopter door-gunnery to the Republic of South Vietnam in early 1963. By the time this first phase was completed in the latter part of 1965, 2,200 men of the 25th Infantry Tropic Lightning Division were involved.

By August 1965, further Division involvement in the coming war in Vietnam came when Company C, 65th Engineer Battalion, was deployed to South Vietnam to assist in the construction of port facilities at Cam Ranh Bay.

**OPERATION BLUE LIGHT** - Again the Division was asked to contribute soldiers in December of that year, so in response to a MACV request for additional combat support, the Division sent 4,000 3rd Brigade infantrymen to the jungles of Vietnam. Operation Blue Light was the largest and longest airlift of personnel and cargo into a combat zone in military history until recently. The Brigade deployed its first soldiers from Hickam Air Force Base, Honolulu,

to the central highlands at Pleiku. These men arrived in Vietnam December 24, 1965. By mid-January, the deployment operation was complete, giving combat planners in Vietnam a favorable balance of power.

An important unit to these combat planners, the Division was heavily engaged from April 1966 until 1969 throughout the area of operations in Southeast Asia. This would lead Tropic Lightning soldiers into battles against a seemingly insurmountable opposition in jungles seemingly impossible to penetrate.

**TET OFFENSIVE/Vietnamization** - During the Tet offensives of 1968 and 1969, Tropic Lightning personnel were instrumental in defending the besieged city of Saigon. Due to its success in fending off that attack, from May 1969 through April 1970, the 25th Infantry Division was mostly involved in the Vietnamization Program, helping the people of Vietnam rebuild their war-torn country, rather than in actual combat. The Division continued to see limited fighting, clearing the Ho Bo and Bo Loi Woods of remaining Viet Cong and assisting in other surrounding areas.

**CAMBODIA** - During the three-month period, April through June 1970, Tropic Lightning soldiers participated in Allied thrusts deep into enemy sanctuaries located in Cambodia. In these operations, the men confiscated thousands of tons of supplies and hundreds of weapons. This operation nearly crippled the Cambodian efforts against American units.

Following its return from Cambodia to South Vietnam, the Division resumed its place in the Vietnamization Program. The war was winding down. By late December 1970, elements of the 25th Infantry Division were able to begin redeployment operations to Schofield Barracks. Second Brigade was the last element of the Tropic Lightning Division to depart Vietnam and arrived at Schofield Barracks in the early days of May 1971.

During the war in Vietnam, 22 Medals of Honor were awarded to Tropic Lightning soldiers; the most number of Medals of Honor received by any other single unit in the war.

## Vietnam War Medal of Honor Recipients

**Spc.4 Daniel Fernandez**

Co. C, 1st Bn., 5th Inf., Feb. 18, 1966

**Capt. Ronald E. Ray**

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf., June 19, 1966

**Capt. Robert F. Foley**

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., Nov. 5, 1966

**Sgt. John F. Baker, Jr.**

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., Nov. 5, 1966

**Capt. Joseph X. Grant**

Co. A, 1st Bn., 14th Inf., Nov. 13, 1966

**Sgt. Ted Belcher**

Co. C, 1st Bn., 14th Inf., Nov. 19, 1966

**1st Sgt. Maximo Yabes**

Co. A, 4th Bn., 9th Inf., Feb. 26, 1967

**1st Lt. Stephen Karopczyc**

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf., March 12, 1967

**1st Lt. Rupert L. Sargent**

Co. B, 4th Bn., 9th Inf., March 15, 1967

**Staff Sgt. Kenneth E. Stumpf**

Co. C, 1st Bn., 35th Inf., April 25, 1967

**Sgt. Charles C. Fleek**

Co. C, 1st Bn., 27th Inf., May 27, 1967

**Capt. Riley Pitts**

Co. C, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., Oct. 31, 1967

**Spc.4 Nicholas J. Cutinha**

Co. C, 4th Bn., 9th Inf., March 2, 1968

**Staff Sgt. Paul R. Lambers**

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf., Aug. 20, 1968

**Staff Sgt. Marvin R. Young**

Co. C, 1st Bn., 5th Inf., Aug. 21, 1968

**1st Lt. John E. Warren, Jr.**

Co. C, 2nd Bn., 22nd Inf., Jan. 14, 1969

**Cpl. Thomas W. Bennett**

Co. B, 1st Bn., 14th Inf., Feb. 9-11, 1969

**Staff Sgt. Robert W. Hartstock**

44th Plt., 3rd Brigade, Feb. 23, 1969

**1st Lt. Stephen H. Doane**

Co. B, 1st Bn., 5th Inf., March 25, 1969

**Staff Sgt. Hammett L. Bowen, Jr.**

Co. C, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf., June 27, 1969

**Spc.4 Danny J. Peterson**

Co. B, 4th Bn., 23rd Inf., Jan. 9, 1970

**1st Lt. Russell A. Steindam**

Trp. B, 3rd Sqdrn., 4th Cav., Feb. 1, 1970

## Post Vietnam Reorganization

After its return to Schofield Barracks, the 25th Infantry Division remained the only Army Division never to have been on the mainland. In a time of overall military downsizing, it was reduced to a single brigade, numbering about 4,000 men.

The Division was reactivated in March 1972, when it was reorganized to include the 29th Brigade of the Hawaii National Guard, which included the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry of the Army Reserves. The 29<sup>th</sup> Brigade was designated as the 25th Infantry Division's roundout-brigade - to be ready in the event of a national emergency.

For the next eight years, the 25th Infantry Division trained throughout the Pacific Theater and continued to improve its combat capabilities. Troop deployments varied in size from squads, participating in training with Fijian forces, to exercises as large as Operation Team Spirit, where more than 5,000 divisional troops airlifted to South Korea for annual training.

**LIGHT INFANTRY** - In 1985 the Division began its reorganization from a conventional infantry division to a light infantry division. The four primary characteristics of this new light infantry division were to be: mission flexibility, rapid deployment, combat readiness at 100 percent strength and a Pacific Basin orientation.

Major configurative changes included the addition of a third brigade, one additional direct-support artillery battalion and the expansion of the combat aviation battalion to a brigade-size unit. With the transfer out of large quantities of heavy equipment, the 25th Infantry Division earned the designation "light" - the reorganization completed by October 1, 1986.

Training became more sophisticated and more intense. In 1988, the first of three projected battalions participated at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. This training center provided the most realistic training available to light forces in the Army. Coupled with Joint/Combined Training Exercises Cobra Gold in Thailand, Kangaroo in Australia and Orient Shield in Japan, the Division's exercise schedule continued to be demanding but all the time increasing the Division's fighting



capabilities. Until the political nature of relations between North and South Korea took a turn for the worse, though, Operation Team Spirit in Korea remained the Division's largest annual maneuver, including more than half of the Division's strength.

## Desert Shield/Storm

One platoon each from Companies A, B, and C, 4th Battalion, 27th Infantry, deployed to Saudi Arabia January 30, 1991. These Tropic Lightning soldiers were scheduled to be replacement squads (as needed) in the ground campaign; however, after observing their thoroughly outstanding performance in desert warfare training, the Assistant Commander of Third U.S. Army asked for them to become the security force for Army (Forward) Headquarters. That assignment did not keep them out of battle, though.

They were alerted, attacked with Third Army (Forward) into Kuwait City February 26, secured the headquarters area and conducted mop-up operations in the city and adjacent mine fields. Company A's platoon was separated from the other Wolfhounds following that battle to accompany General H. Norman Schwarzkopf into Iraq March 1 providing security at the truce signing. The three platoons returned to Schofield Barracks, without casualties March 20, 1991.

## Uphold Democracy

More than 3,700 soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) deployed to Haiti in January 1995 to participate in the peacekeeping mission Operation Uphold Democracy.

**TWO-FOLD MISSION** - The Division's mission was two-fold: the Division staff assumed the role of the Multinational Force Headquarters while soldiers of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades became members of the United States Forces contingent. As the Multinational Force Commander, the 25th Infantry Division (Light) Commanding General assumed responsibility for soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Coast Guardsmen from 27

nations, including the Caribbean community, Nepal, Bangladesh and Guam.

Maj. Gen. George A. Fisher, as well as other members of the multinational staff, worked with President Jean Bertrand Aristide and members of the various ministries to help Haiti reestablish itself as a democratic republic. Additionally, the staff provided the resources necessary for the Multinational Force to conduct this vital peacekeeping mission. Many of the missions undertaken in Uphold Democracy required military acumen and a great deal of diplomacy and managerial expertise. Members of the Division staff and subordinate commands worked extensively with members of the Haitian government in laying the foundation for a successful democracy. But while the staff was busy building a budding democracy, Division peacekeeping units were deployed to two separate areas of the tiny island nation.

In the south, members of the 2nd Brigade provided security for President Aristide, the National Palace and other locations in Port-au-Prince critical to Haiti's budding democratic government. Through their vigilance and presence there, the threat to the government and government officials was significantly lowered.

In the north, members of the 3rd Brigade were stationed at Cap Haitien. There the unit assisted the government in establishing law and order, developing infrastructure and setting the conditions necessary for promoting democracy.

Throughout Haiti, members of the 25th Military Police Battalion were critical in upgrading the national prison and assisting in the training of the Haitian interim security force. Their part of the job done, the 25th Infantry Division (Light) officially left Haiti March 31, 1995 when the United Nations Mission in Haiti assumed command. Approximately 500 2nd



Brigade soldiers, though, remained as part of the United Nations Force through early June 1995.

## Today

**DIVISION REORGANIZATION** - As part of the Defense Department's struggle to downsize America's military, the Division underwent another reorganization and reduction from March through May 1995. The order was to reduce the active Army to a 10-division force. First Brigade and its direct support units were inactivated and moved to Fort Lewis, Wash., where they were again reactivated as a detached brigade of the 25th Infantry Division (Light). The detached brigade and its support units remain trained and ready to fight under the Division's command in any contingency requiring light infantry soldiers.

With the Department of Army downsizing to 10 Divisions came a reorganization of unit designations Army-wide in an effort to preserve unit histories, traditions and alignments. The 25th Infantry Division (Light) felt this reorganization

as its remaining units were reflagged. The Division's current required strength in Hawaii is 9,368 personnel.

The 25th Infantry Division (Light) continues to train throughout the Pacific Theater to improve its capabilities through troop deployment and allied training, both here and abroad. Each year Tropic Lighting soldiers deploy from Schofield Barracks to participate in exercises in Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, Korea and the Big Island of Hawaii. In addition, soldiers from 11 Pacific Basin nations come to Hawaii to participate in exchange programs with 25th Infantry Division (Light) units organized by the U.S. Army, Pacific Command every year. This program ensures success on the joint service and combined nation military battlefields should a contingency require it.

All this leads to the Division's motto - earned more than 50 years ago but very much applicable today:

***Ready to Strike!  
Anytime. Anywhere.***

### Units Assigned to 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Light)

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade**

HHC 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade  
1-14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion  
1-21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion  
1-27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade**

HHC, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade  
2-5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion  
2-35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion  
2-27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Ft. Lewis, WA)**

1-5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion  
1-33<sup>rd</sup> Armor Battalion  
1-24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion  
3-21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion  
25<sup>th</sup> Forward Support Battalion  
2-8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery

#### **Aviation Brigade**

HHC Aviation Brigade  
1-25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment  
2-25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment  
3-4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry  
C Co., 25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment  
G Company, 58<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment  
68<sup>th</sup> Medical Co.

#### **Division Support Command**

HHC Discom  
225<sup>th</sup> Forward Support Battalion  
325<sup>th</sup> Forward Support Battalion  
725<sup>th</sup> Main Support Battalion  
8<sup>th</sup> Medical Company  
71<sup>st</sup> Chemical Company

#### **Separate Units**

65<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion  
125<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Bn.  
125<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion  
1-62<sup>nd</sup> Air Defense Artillery  
25<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion  
58<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion  
556<sup>th</sup> Personnel Service Bn.  
HHC 25<sup>th</sup> ID (Light)  
Band 25<sup>th</sup> ID (Light)

#### **Division Artillery**

HHC, Divarty  
2-11<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery  
3-7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery  
F Battery, 7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery  
25<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Detachment